

The sustainability credentials of the proposed redevelopment of Nicholson Quarter

12th November 2025

Background

Areli submitted a revised proposal for the redevelopment of Nicholson Quarter in April 2025. It attracted considerable interest; ECO Action objected strongly to the proposal and has argued for a refurbished alternative, primarily on the grounds of the embodied carbon penalty of demolition and construction.

This has led to significant interaction between Areli and ECO Action. As a result, we have jointly achieved a better understanding of, and respect for, each other's positions.

This paper is the result of these interactions.

Areli's record

Areli CEO Rob Tincknell is the former CEO of the Battersea Power Station Development Company and for 12 years was responsible for the delivery of the Battersea Power Station project - one of the most significant and ambitious refurbishment and regeneration schemes ever delivered in the UK. After multiple previous failed attempts, Battersea Power Station is now a major success story, and this is owed in part to its thoughtful adaptation of the existing historic building fabric to create an environmentally and socially sustainable living, working and leisure community, whilst also minimising carbon footprint as far as possible. Areli as a business continues to champion the ethos of 're-use and refurbish' wherever viable and appropriate across its development portfolio.

In addition to its development projects, Areli has also been a key driving force behind the East Midlands Supercluster Vision, which supports the delivery of the UK Government's STEP fusion programme in the East Midlands; along with also spearheading the former East Midlands Development Company's proposal to produce a net-zero focused Vision and Masterplan framework for some of its key economic sites across the region.

The 'demolish and reconstruct' or refurbish dilemma

As discussed in the ECO Matters article in the Maidenhead Advertiser on Friday 13th September, a combination of financial pressures and environmental concerns about embodied carbon is leading to greater popularity for sustainable regeneration for town

centres rather than ‘demolish and rebuild’. The article referenced below summarises the general dilemma for developers on this important question.

<https://urbanistarchitecture.co.uk/retrofitting-buildings-article>.

The quandary for Maidenhead

The situation in Maidenhead is complex, for the following reasons:

- The **low-rise** shopping centre occupies almost all of the proposed development site. It is not possible to subdivide it in any effective way. **Unless it is largely demolished, it prevents any commercially viable redevelopment.**
- Maidenhead is under considerable housing pressure from central government. A net gain of 500 dwellings makes a substantial contribution to its resolution.
- Because of its good public transport links, Maidenhead is a very attractive office location, achieving the highest rents outside the M25.

In contrast to the non-viability of a refurbishment option, a **mid-rise** redevelopment with +500 residential units and 15,000 sqm of offices, as allocated in the Borough Local Plan, can be sufficiently commercially viable to permit ground level, community and retail activities that could not happen otherwise.

If the proposed redevelopment does not proceed, there is no viable alternative and the decline of this part of Maidenhead will continue, to no-one’s satisfaction.

This development enables considerable environmentally responsible improvements to Maidenhead that:

- Comply with, or exceed, relevant regulations, including:
 - The 2024 SSPD (Noting that it is simply not feasible to ‘keep the existing building’ and achieve a commercially viable way forward.)
 - Targeting BREEAM Excellent for the office element and HQM 4 stars for the residential element;
 - Total site wide carbon savings of 66% compared to the Part L 2021 baseline, through highly efficient energy solutions;
 - A 100% electrically powered development.
- Make Maidenhead an attractive, go-to, more sustainable and successful, **destination** that will complement neighbouring towns with more traditional retail offerings.
- Protect Maidenhead from opportunistic housing developments on the outskirts of the town that would infringe green belt areas, increase reliance on car travel and therefore be less environmentally responsible.
- Support many of the changes in behaviour that underpin the emerging RBWM’s Climate and Nature Strategy Action Plan 2026 – 30. These are addressed in a separate section below.

Overall cost / income and sustainability / community benefit analysis

The table below shows the overall breakdown of costs and income streams. It clearly demonstrates how the accommodation and offices subsidises the ground level activities, including those for the community.

Table of cost and income components of proposed development

Activity	% cost	% Value
Demolition	1%	0
Infrastructure	11%	0
Offices	9%	15%
Residential accommodation	64%	80%
Ground level retail and community	15%	5%
TOTALS	100%	100%

The second table summarises how the ground level activities are divided between the various components. Further details on each activity are listed below.

Table of components of ground level activities

Activity	% of total space	% of frontage	% of total cost
Flexible Uses (Retail, Leisure, Café, Restaurant etc)	84%	79%	15%
Active Ground Floor Residents Amenity (Café, Restaurant, Co-Working etc) – Some accessible to public	13%	19%	
Community Activities (Shopmobility)	3%	2%	

Flexible Uses:

- A curated (carefully chosen and thoughtfully organized), market facing, offer that is focused on independent and local shops selling a range of products from bakers and butcher to wine shops and leather goods.
- The new Sir Nicholas Winton square will be activated with restaurants and pop-ups, craft and specialist markets and a programme of events and activities, to create a place where people come together to shop, socialise and relax.
- The ground floor offer has been curated through engagement with residents, businesses, town centre managers and specialist advisors; to create the visitor experience that customers now want from their town centres.
- The offer has been designed to provide smaller, flexible and affordable spaces for a range of interesting retailers and responds to strong interest from local breweries and local restaurants.

Active Ground Floor Residents Amenity – some accessible to public:

- Social: informal workspaces with cafe, meeting rooms, board game café, restaurant.
- Recreational: gyms and hobby spaces, venues for music and arts, family spaces
- Community: meeting spaces, exhibitions, pre-school activity centre

Community activities that do not generate any income

- Re-provided shop mobility space and the flexibility to accommodate doctors, creches, soft play and other similar service providers for the community, together with an opportunity to provide a new home for community groups already in the Nicholsons Shopping Centre.

Facilitating the changes in behaviour that underpin the emerging RBWM Climate and Nature Action Plan 2026 – 30

It is widely recognised that profound changes in behaviour are urgently and globally needed if the worst effects of climate change are to be avoided.

RBWM responses are being channeled through the RBWM Climate and Nature Strategy (2026 to 2035) and its associated five year Action and Communications Plans.

What follows are some examples of how the new Nicholson Quarter will facilitate these changes for residents and visitors, without significant personal sacrifice.

- **Promoting simpler, greener lifestyles**
The attractive, multi-functional centre will encourage residents to enjoy spending more time near home, with less need to seek entertainment from travel.
- **Improved energy efficiency**
This exemplary new build will encourage others to insist on greater energy efficiency.
- **More renewable energy**
As the detailed design develops, there will be opportunities to increase the use of on- site PV power generation that will reduce energy costs and, if locally controlled, give residents 'ownership' of their power supply and usage.
- **Reduced travel**
The high density will make it much easier for the new residents to walk to their leisure pursuits and train station. Visitors will readily be able to walk to their offices and places of leisure activities. This enables a reduction in car parking requirements
- **Car Parking**
Better utilization of existing car park capacity in Maidenhead town centre

- **Active travel**

The greater density will encourage walking and cycling

- **Access to public transport**

Both trains and buses are very accessible to the local population.

- **EV infrastructure**

The development will provide 10% active and 20% passive EV charging, except for the residential element, which will provide 20% active and 80% passive. This results in a total of 357 potential charging points , with 80 being available from day one.

The way forward

The interactions between Areli and ECO Action have demonstrated that the proposed development of the Nicholson Quarter is the only viable way forward for the centre of Maidenhead.

The demolition of the old shopping centre is very regrettable but is essential to enable the town centre to be regenerated into a more sustainable and commercially viable future.

The redevelopment will create environmental advantages that more than outweigh the embodied carbon deficit from the demolition and reconstruction.

Work will commence in early 2026, assuming planning permission has been granted by then.

Graham Owens

Chair of Trustees, ECO Action for Windsor and Maidenhead

Rob Tincknell

CEO Areli Developments

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